

the following Member of the House to the Canada-United States Inter-parliamentary Group:

Mr. HOUGHTON of New York, Chairman.

There was no objection.

IN MEMORY OF LINDA ASCHENBACH-HACKMANN

(Mr. GILCHREST asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise publicly to honor the memory of a true hero, a woman who gave her time, patience, experience, knowledge, and love to the young adults at Northeast High School in my district. In 1996, Linda Aschenbach-Hackmann, a former student and outstanding athlete, stepped in to fill a coaching vacancy for the girls' softball team. Her impact was immediate, leading the team to the State finals during the next 2 years.

In late 1998, sadly, Linda was stricken with lymphoma cancer, confining her to the hospital with continuous painful treatments. Still, she managed to coach the team from her hospital bed and rally them from the sidelines. When Linda passed away in April 1999, her funeral was attended by hundreds of families and friends, including her beloved girls from the softball team that decorated her casket with the winning ball autographed by the players, for that year the girls won the State championship.

Mr. Speaker, there can be no greater sacrifice for children today than giving our love and our patience and our time. She is a true hero. I want to thank Capitol Hill Police Officer Dave Pendleton and Linda's brother Gary for bringing this to our attention.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the letter Linda's brother sent to us.

IN MEMORY OF LINDA ASCHENBACH-HACKMANN
(By Gary Aschenbach)

As a result of a sudden, unscheduled change in staff at Northeast High School, the girls Junior Varsity softball team was left without a coach. Anxious to fill that position, a search was initiated to immediately locate an interested and qualified person. On the overwhelming recommendation of colleagues, Mrs. Linda Aschenbach-Hackmann, a former student of Northeast High and star athlete, was sought to fill the position. Linda accepted the position and began her coaching career at Northeast in 1996, where in the first and second year she successfully led the team to compete in the state finals. In 1999, they triumphed to not only compete in the finals, but progressed to win the JV County Championship with an 18-0 record. The team's achievement had not accomplished in over a decade at Northeast High School.

Without warning, in late 1998 Linda was suddenly stricken with Lymphoma cancer that eventually confined her to hospital care undergoing continuous, painful treatment. Still, she kept a watchful eye on the excellent progress of her talented softball team. She received daily updates and visits from fellow coaches and players as she continued

to coach and rally her girls from the sidelines. Through her relentless love of players and the game, she won the respect and confidence of everyone. On April 17, 1999, exactly 30 years to the day after the death of her father, Linda succumbed to the attack of the cancer after a gallant fight. Her funeral was attended by hundreds of family and friends, including her beloved girls from the softball team who decorated her casket with the winning ball autographed by the players.

Linda will always be remembered for her sportsmanship and ability to teach the fundamental rules and skills of the successful ball player. Her enthusiastic personality was complimented by the natural patience she shared with the youth. After her death and in her memory for so many accomplishments, Northeast High School paid special tribute to Linda at the highest possible standard. They immediately offered in her honor an annual scholarship to be given to a qualified athletic student. The criteria for this award required that the recipient continually demonstrate the same community and leadership qualities toward others as they seek to further their own education and career.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

ELIMINATION OF THE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to just talk about a very fundamental issue, a fundamental issue of importance to 50 million American taxpayers, 50 million middle-class working Americans. I have often been asked, whether I am at the steel workers hall in Hegewish in the South Side of Chicago or the Legion post in Joliet or a chamber of commerce or the coffee shop called Weit's Cafe in Morris, Illinois, my hometown, or the local grain elevator, a pretty fundamental question; and that question is, is it right, is it fair, that under our Tax Code 25 million married working couples on average pay \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married?

Folks back home just do not understand why for almost 30 years we have had a marriage tax penalty, which the average is \$1,400 each for 25 million married working couples. In the south suburbs in the South Side of Chicago, \$1,400 is real money. It is a year's tuition at a local community college for a nursing student. It is 3 months of day care. It is a washer and a dryer. It is 4,000 diapers for a child.

Mr. Speaker, we need to address the issue of fairness. We need to address the issue to wipe out the marriage tax penalty suffered by 50 million married working people. It is an issue of fairness.

Here is how it works: what causes the marriage tax penalty is when a couple

decides to marry, when they file their taxes, they file jointly. When they file their taxes jointly, their combined income usually pushes them into a higher tax bracket.

Let me introduce Shad and Michele Hallihan, two public school teachers from Joliet, Illinois. Shad and Michele have been married almost 2 years now. They just had a baby, a wonderful young couple; but they suffer almost the average marriage tax penalty.

Now, Shad and Michele have a combined income of about \$62,000. Suppose that they have an equal income, each making \$31,000. Michele here, if she stayed single, would be in the 15 percent tax bracket; but because she and Shad married, their combined income of \$62,000 pushes them into the 28 percent tax bracket, creating well over almost the average marriage tax penalty of \$1,400.

We want to help couples like Shad and Michele. Michele pointed out to me that the average marriage tax penalty would buy almost 4,000 diapers for their newborn baby.

Should not those couples like Michele and Shad be allowed to keep money, keep their hard-earned salary, their hard-earned income, rather than paying a tax just because they are married?

We are working to address that, and I was so pleased that this House of Representatives overwhelmingly supported, with a bipartisan vote, 268 Members of the House endorsed wiping out the marriage tax penalty in order to help couples such as Michele and Shad Hallihan.

H.R. 6, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, passed this House as a stand-alone bill and addresses one issue, the need to wipe out the marriage tax penalty for 25 million married working couples. If we look at who pays the marriage tax penalty, one half of them itemize their taxes, millions of middle-class families itemize because they own a home or give money to church or charity, have education expenses. Well, we wipe out the marriage tax penalty for those who itemize their taxes by widening the 15 percent tax bracket so that joint filers can earn twice as much as single filers and stay in the 15 percent tax bracket. That will help Shad and Michele Hallihan.

For those who do not itemize, we double the standard deduction, helping those who do not itemize by doubling the standard deduction to be twice that of single people. We also help the working poor, those who participate in the earned income credit, by addressing the income eligibility, eliminating the marriage penalty for the working poor as well.

Mr. Speaker, it is a good bill. It helps those who itemize. It helps those who do not itemize. The primary beneficiaries are those with incomes between \$30,000 and \$75,000, those who suffer the marriage tax penalty the most. We do not raise taxes on anyone. We wipe out the marriage tax penalty. We

help stay-at-home moms. We help those who are homeowners.

Mr. Speaker, eliminating the marriage tax penalty is a fundamental issue of fairness, and that is what it is all about. Let us make our Tax Code more fair.

Now, this legislation, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, H.R. 6, passed the House with 268 votes. Every House Republican and 48 Democrats broke with their leadership to support our effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. We have tremendous momentum, and my hope is our friends in the Senate will follow the lead of the House, move quickly to move a stand-alone bill wiping out the marriage tax penalty; not loaded up with amendments or extraneous riders or other poison pills.

My hope is that they will keep it a clean bill and that they will move expeditiously and as quickly as possible to wipe out the marriage tax penalty for couples like Michele and Shad Hallihan. That is what it is all about, fairness. Let us wipe out the marriage tax penalty. Let us make the Tax Code more fair. We ask for bipartisan support.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. RILEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RILEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SENIORS SHOULD NOT BE PENALIZED FOR CONTINUING TO BE PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, as we conclude legislative business today, I particularly commend my colleague from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) on his fine presentation on eliminating the marriage penalty, a vote we had first and foremost in our Committee on Ways and Means, of which I am a proud member, and obviously brought to the floor with overwhelming success in a bipartisan spirit of trying to eliminate the tax burden on married couples throughout America.

Another issue we are debating and considering and, of course, has been authored by several people, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER), but really one of the people that we need to single out today on

this special bill is the Speaker of this House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT).

They say success has many parents and failure is an orphan. Well, today we can call one bill that will be coming to the Committee on Ways and Means next week and hopefully quickly to the House floor a very big success and that is thanks to the hard work, again, of the Speaker.

In 1986, Mr. HASTERT, the Speaker of the House, introduced a bill to eliminate the earnings penalty by our seniors that basically for the ages of 65 through 69, when they continue to work productively, they start losing, diminishing, their Social Security monies that come to their account. So virtually in America one is penalized, based on the Tax Code, for working past the age of 65.

Clearly, all statistical data indicate people are living longer, more fruitful lives. They are more productive and more engaged in society, but somehow through the years a discriminatory position of the Tax Code has said we are going to start deducting from their earnings for every \$3.00 over \$17,000 they earn they will have a one dollar liability, basically losing one dollar of Social Security benefit. That is a horrendous policy. That is a terrible discriminatory policy of the Federal Government.

Now everybody lately has been saying, I am for that bill. The President says he will quickly sign it. The minority leader says, I am for that bill; in fact, it was a Democratic proposal.

Well, let me talk about the hard work of the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) since 1986 in bringing that proposal to the floor. Obviously, it was stymied. It was not agreed upon. It was not voted on for many, many years.

Finally, we have a chance to correct what I think is a colossal inequity in the Tax Code, and that is to say to senior citizens 65 through 70, that, yes, we encourage them to continue to work; yes, we in fact applaud them for their continuation of working in the mainstream and, secondly, we are not going to penalize them any longer for that productive activity.

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I think it says a lot about where America is going and whether we should value seniors and value their input and value their expertise and value the fact that they are willing to continue to work hard in the marketplace.

So, as I say, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW), the chairman of the Social Security Subcommittee on Ways and Means, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT) and others who have joined with us today in this important opportunity, the committee will, in fact, be bringing the bill to the floor, or at least to the

committee, next week and then onto the floor.

So, first and foremost, we have had, at least on the House floor, elimination of the marriage penalty as a priority. Now we are facing an opportunity to do something for seniors. And we can continue to work on these initiatives.

Let us be clear. We have balanced the budget. Yes, we still have a huge debt that we must pay, \$5.7 trillion total debt, and we are working on a plan in fact to reduce that. The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), the Speaker; the President; virtually everybody agrees that it is time to pay down the debt. Let us do that. Let us do that while we have that surplus cash flow.

We also have a chance to shore up Social Security and Medicare, and I think that it is incumbent upon everyone in the room to reach across party lines and start developing a format in which Social Security and Medicare can be reserved.

Finally, I am certain we will join together in some form of coverage for medicines, health care. Medicare will provide some kind of pharmaceutical relief for those desperately in need of relief from the high cost of pharmaceutical and prescription drugs.

These are issues I believe the Congress can work on without a lot of rancor and bitterness. These are issues that are fundamentally and vitally important for people throughout America. They are programs that seniors depend on.

I think this Congress, now as we enter the 21st century, not only has the fundamental opportunity and responsibility, but clearly now has the resources to make some of these things come to reality: pay down the debt, modest tax cuts for those who desperately need them, shoring up Social Security and Medicare, and doing the kinds of things that will instill in us not only a national sense of pride but also act as a model for young people.

By suggesting finally that the Federal Government is going to pay its debts, maybe it sinks into those who have failed to live up to their responsibility, recognizes the true leadership that is necessary, and they in fact in their own personal lives start paying down debts that they may owe, credit cards and other things that have probably hampered their ability for economic prosperity.

If America is going to move forward, we can start embracing some of these topics today. But I again urge my colleagues to sign on to the elimination of the senior penalty, where we tax those 65 to 69 for continuing to be productive citizens in society. Undo this horrible tax, if you will, on their earning capabilities. Take free the shackles from them and allow them to be productive, prosperous, and successful Americans like everyone else.